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1920

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A Little Book of Poems

By

Henrietta M. Chase



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POEMS

By

HENRIETTA M. CHASE
GROTON, MASS.

Boston

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Poems

P o e m s

Mothers, — Their Day

May 12, 1912

Just the very best ever
Be the age now beginning,
In your deft hands a lever
That shall set things a-spinning.

There's need of the spinner's skein,
Of the fuller's and dyer's art,
That the garments of youth withstand the strain
Of mire, and mill, and mart.

Nor web nor woof fail inert
If only spinner wind true
Such tested threads as may one day girl
Riven worlds and make good as new.

Mother Earth herself's just a spinner,
Convoying the threads that we wind,
Nor stopping, the splendid old winner,
Any sorry tangles to mind;

But with whirr and with lilt she gauges
And *holds to the threads, that's the thing*;
Till, a boon to the galloping ages,
She has them all wound on her string!

So fall in, and line up, spinning Mothers,
Toilless lilies are no guide for you!
Set the pace for the fathers and brothers,
For their bally old spinning won't do!

A Reversal to Type

For the Old First Parish Meeting House

1754 — Groton — 1918

Spring reigns. On high, the sun spreads wide his scales
 Heavy with season's press, trick that new Spring avails,
 Setting dials even for March day or night,
 Short-shrifting old Winter, sun-dried in his plight.

Thus season ranks season, one's progress imposed
 On the fall of a former spent monarch deposed;
 And the pliant old earth has registered all
 The æons of change that have answered their call.

Take the hint, each wee blade of waiting new grass
 Hid close 'neath old belfry where worshippers pass,
 Push your neat folds aloft clear of soot-blackened soil,
 O'erarch it with emerald, white church for a foil.

'Tis the gauge of your tints mark the scope of a spring
 Long at work under ground in forehanded mingling
 Of life-forces vast threaded tight through the mold
 Left by other life force, left broken, grown cold

In frost-hardened network that smothered all mark,
 It still holds largess for new life to embark,
 And each hillock's slope is a base of supplies
 To guard against loss. Only mind could devise

Such means to remodel old life to new need,
 And place in the ground in excess of meed,
 Silent, uniform sentries of life, not still,
 Not swerved from their own, on the way to fulfil

A royal decree of the sunbeams whose throne
Is the floor of the world, where all paths lead home
To seekers for light. Thus a place in the sun
Was found for this old church when thought had outrun

A narrowing creed. On the heights rose the church,
A pioneer stout as oak, maple or birch
That crowded about, swarming transcripts of light
Whose glorified fall lent fair shape and still might

To these outside church walls. Nor lacking in weight
Was the timber inside, that, with pious debate
Held down the warped lid of their puzzle-chest sound
(But let some juggle through, quite enough to go round

And puzzle their offspring). But clarified scope
Came with modeling minds, till, braced by great hope,
Our patriarch founders' whole-hearted toil
Transmitted their light through time's mist and turmoil

To guide present day thought. Old church on the hill,
Material, militant, divine in the thrill
Your human creed weaves through our common ideas
Constructive, alive, through procession of years,

Quicken the visible church to energized deeds,
Its invisible life to a purpose that reads
All history aright for the story that's fraught
With the meaning light holds for new tendrils of thought.

Read thus, man's mind works itself up from the clod,
On the way to its own, to hold converse with God.
Divinity's span is so near, so secure,
So stable a girder 'twixt two worlds that endure

Side by side, seen and not seen, — each true to form, —
That it hath no need of foundation or dome.
Because of his *own need*, man quarried a ledge
For this church corner-stone, with sharp cutting edge

Turned 'gainst error and gloom. Its strong upward thrust
Still bears structural ideals built by hands long since dust.
Ah, the work of those hands, how it outlived their stay,
To charm passers-by since the old stage-coach's slow day.

How it scorns nascent speed, with its harrowing bray,
And looks down on smooth varnish of the touring car gay!
How it touches warm hearts that are throbbing to-day,
While each round of its clock swings mortality's way!

But, good cheer for all! those old founders have scored
For their early ideals with our own parish board.
They declare for that first architectural form,
Modeled two hundred years before they were born,

That it's faith's household word, a four-square means of grace;
That through church, state and schools, has won a large place
In the civilized world's slow march to the fore,
And should go on, repeating, as now, evermore.

And lest we, the grandchildren of men, should forget
Those other grandsires whose tall frames are set
In church lintel and post, shall we linger to hear
What their descendants, our trees, are whispering so near?

They plan some high lights for earth's festival nigh,
When Spring, high commander shall come tiptoeing by!
Then they'll send white sap on a colorate raid,
Tingeing every tree fibre a different shade.

Resilient to all Spring's loveliest pranks,
They salute while she shells, in their mobilized ranks,
The buds set by last year's Autumnal pursuits,
And so keep full tree ranks for new building recruits.

Their heritage grows but by seasonal increase
In that pith that makes good for men's building decrees.
Our heritage grows by the outpouring of gifts
That enrich church annals for each cent'ries' uplift.

Song. A. C. H.

March, 1900

Once, pilgrim verse made common cause
With singer's art. Loose-robed, foot sure,
Each climbed to song's redoubt, nor paused
Till hoarded music's beckoning lure
 Made guest and heir of each.
Through song's exacting *course*,
Long golden range of art,
Each pilgrim found the way
To universal heart.

And then, heart echoes, sharing change
Recast to fuller, finer rhyme
Fragments of song content that range
Past singer's art or pilgrim's time,
 To form new votive shrine,
Where ready echo waits
The stride of ageless art,
Where hang the wayside lamps
Beloved of pilgrim heart.

If late their coursing wide should speed
'Gainst wordless might of human moan
See monstrous deed and insane creed
And hollow ringing vows o'erthrown
 By hearts song swept!
Man's need of thee, thou drive
Of mistral age-long art:
God's place for thee, thou song,
Thou song that found His heart.

The Wind and The Flag

May, 1896

Fair breeze of the city, far gales of the sea
Spread aloft to our vision the dear flag of the free.

See it wave and pulse and beat
Like the heart of the grand old sea,
As it stretches its arms all lands to greet,
Where flow the tides of its life so free.

Now ye life-giving North winds breathe your soul in its fibre
Till each delicate thread respond like the lyre
Attuned to the magic of Orpheus' hand,
Enchanting, thrilling all conditions of man
With its long song of freedom through strife on to glory,
Its love-note of home ever charming in story,
Its blithesome revéille calling young heroes forth
To fight for Old Glory, O, bold Wind of the North!

And what of the South wind? Doth its languor entwine
Our beautiful flag 'gainst the hard Southern pine?
See it ripple and coil and fly
In the dusk of the warm Southern glade
Whence to heaven once rose its bond children's cry
Where once in despair bowed the heart of the slave.

Up! tremulous South wind, glad healing to bring
To a nation long pining, a nation whose sin
Reaped the terrible whirlwind whose merciless breath
Cut its track of destruction and sorrow and death.
Now linger sweet wind round each barren hearth-stone
Till Vesta rekindle home fires that once shone
O'er stalwart young frames now moldering to dust,
Ah, breathe low soft winds for home voices long hushed.

Meet all winds of heaven, from the Westward blow free,
Waft America's spirit o'er land and o'er sea.
May it comfort and succor and ease
All the depth of humanity's woe,
May its beautiful emblem just homage receive,
May the bond become free wheresoe'er it may go.

Help, marvelous trade winds, to sweep from the skies
 All the deadly mirage of monarchical lies
 That long with false guerdon the East hath misled
 And e'en to our own Western islands hath spread.
 Then make haste, circling winds, and girdle earth's zone,
 Giving course to the empire of freemen alone,
 That aye Westward advances while loud pæans ring:
 East, West, North, and South — God only is King.

The New Order

(Sung to the tune of "The Star Spangled Banner.")

Carry on, flag of fate! For man's destined estate
 Brave the fight for the right that exalteth a nation.
 Shed the light of your stars through the far verge of wars
 Where bowed hosts, slow of sight, wait the range of your vision.
 Never purpose of yours through the long steadfast years
 E'er broke faith with the call of humanity's tears.
 And now, through woe's tempest, you are challenged to save
 A world from mad rule, a sane faith from the grave.

Carry on, flag of fate! The sane order spread wide
 As the dome of the sky 'bove the Old World's sad pleadings.
 Round the desolate place of her scarred countryside
 Lead your men with the trophies of a freeland's long gleanings.
 And where'er wanton sires, trebly arming their chiefs,
 Urge the might of false code in an emprise that leaves
 The trail of the serpent through lands foully bled,
 Right of way for all freemen! Theirs to bruise the serpent's head!

Patriots' Day

Concord, 1775 — 1901

Think you they are dead who a century ago
 Wrought out the new gospel that all men might know
 Of the kinghood of freemen that could not degrade
 With tariff and tribute to imperial crown paid
 Its inherent and God-given right?
 In each clang of the bell that ushers the light,
 In each budding flower that 'neath tender green hides,
 In each swelling leaf on the cold mountains' sides,
 In each flash of the gun and the drum-beat sonorous,
 In each loyal heart throbbing high with the chorus,
 Read the promise of life, not the sentence of death,
 The patriots' day ceased not with his breath!

And why? what guerdon immortal had these yeomen of old
 That centuries hence their fame shall be told?
 Did they dream of the laurel wreath, fadeless, serene,
 That destiny plaits for its own kings and queens?
 Ah, no! they but scorned such as trinket and bauble,
 For aught else than plain duty they cared not a ruble.
 Not threat nor attain nor punishment drear
 Held terror for hearts unaccustomed to fear,
 The whip of earth's monarchs, the curse of its peers,
 The gloom of its dungeons or the scorn of its sneers!
 Not prize, nor award, nor honor, nor pelf
 Might purchase the title they claimed to themselves,
 To their hardly won fields, to their homesteads so dear,
 Voice of honor untarnished, thought untrammelled and clear!

Ah, sires heroic! souls lofty and grand,
 Though ye wrought not for glory your memorial shall stand
 Where, untrained, your bent brows once pierced the thick smoke
 Of a monarch's misrule when his minions' lines broke,
 And light, steady, triumphant, light eternal, serene,
 Alluring, transcendent, flashed the broad hills between,
 Impartial and glowing 'bove proud Britain's blades keen,

'Bove flint-lock and spear-heads, and bare arms true as steel,
'Bove musket and drum-head, rough utensils of strife,
'Bove artificer's bugle and the farmer's rude fife,
A wide nexus of glory that held all in its gleam
And sent the shadows all trembling to die on the stream.

There ye stood, Minute Men! stood facing the dawn
Of an era of freedom whose oncoming morn
Surged resistless and mighty as the vast ocean's sweep
'Neath the track of the tempest when deep calleth to deep;
And your low range of vision leaped its boundaries to scan
The new day-spring of promise whose late beams should span
All heaven's high dome with a covenant flame
That should lead forth a nation from its bondage to gain
The heritage promised. And the way marks ye set!
Lord God of the nations! *Can* we ever forget?
Stone heaped upon stone! the Republic's bed rock
Displacing forever by that first battle's shock
Drift of empire's sand 'cross the new Western zone,
And founding on Virtue, Freedom's long promised home.

First Anniversary, Hawthorne Chapter, O. E. S.

Concord Junction, 1896

Round our star in the East since its mild ray first shone
On that nineteenth of April now one year ago
Our five loyal sisters have told and retold
The significant story of heroines old.

By its soft rays we glimpsed Jephthah's daughter's sweet eyes,
Fond Ruth's deathless love and Naomi's surprise,
Esther's fearless devotion to her own country's weal,
Martha's sorrowful care brought to Jesus to heal;

Electa, blameless herself, with sweet charity covers
All the folly and sin and misfortune of others.
Five rays of a star, five links of a chain,
Forged centuries ago in white furnace of pain,

Now girdling the world with an infinite love,
Pure as sunshine, true as steel, yet soft as the dove
That sights gathered mist clouds o'er mountain peaks rolled,
That brings back the myrtle, type of love, to its home.

So the mother, the daughter, widow, sister, and wife
Symbolize forever the best thing in life.
That best thing is love; love alone is eternal.
In the midst of our star stands its altar supernal,

Uplifting our offering of peace and good-will.
Would we make of them benison to those who may fill
Our places hereafter? We need but be true
To the lofty ideals here presented to view.

Walk the plain path of duty, be it dull, be it bright,
Till we reach the wellspring that must rise to the height
Of its source. That source is in God, whose calm waters deep
Must still mirror the star when earth's children shall sleep,

Shall all sleep on her breast in a dreamless repose
That echoes no struggles, that voices no woes,
That recks not of earthquake or whirlwind or strife,
Or mortal desire, but close, close to the life

Of that calm centre of peace round which tempests revolve
Solves the mystery of death our dear brothers have solved
Who, one year ago, clasped hands round our star
Whose invisible fingers now beckon afar.

And now as pilot steers his homeward turning bark
Through vexing seas where hover night and dark,
And, careful, strains his eyes to watch the polar star
That guides him safe inside the harbor bar,
So we, through untrod paths to lighten all the way,
Look to the Eastern Star that heralds dawn of day.

Fill the Bill

Summer, 1910

Teach — teach — teach her?
 Sun's up, you charming creature,
 See? See?
 Wide-eyed the song-mate's new plumed for the fray;
 Blind nest and dulled wings bar her right of way;
 Light and dark lay their covers
 Where my lady-bird hovers.
 Sun, wind and rain dip the leaves,
 Nature's lien holds while she breathes
 An even assent to fresh life's pleading note
 From her nest in the wild where dreams are afloat,
 Teach, teach, teach her?
 Not I, the knowing creature!
 See? See?

Teach, teach, teach her?
 O, my, you poaching creature:
 Quit! Quit!
 But cherries! paired deep behind sunlit screen!
 Padded worms and slim bugs, just wait to be seen!
 Pick 'em up in a hurry;
 Trim 'em up and then scurry;
 Earth's her own for a season,
 And the bent of her reason
 Is, fill the bill, the bill, crude, noisy and small,
 But she keeps on till petite voices call
 Teach, teach, teach her?
 Pardon the doting creature?
 She's it,
 And a hit, a hit, a hit, a-a-a hit!

Twentieth Century

"Not Arms and the Man,
But tools and the man."

Written January 1, 1900, at Concord, Mass.

Hail! twentieth century, Argus eyed,
Renowned for light and leading
Toward your famed one hundred years
Creation wide is speeding.

To hearts that break with strain and stress
And thought that wakens weary,
To eyes grown dim through long unrest,
And souls oppressed and dreary,

O grant swift vision to perceive
What your clear sight discernest,
Your quickened understanding give,
To minds sincere and earnest.

Compel the roving glance to rest
Where your search-light engages
The hosts of night that long have pressed
Their conflict on the ages.

Then, far and wide within the gleam,
All folly's mists rise scattered,
And vice and sin, her next of kin,
With feeble ranks and shattered,

Fall backward, driven close on crime,
And, massing, surge together,
Van, flank and rear, a warring line
That rids the world of either.

Then, side by side within the glow,
 Wisdom's full ranks advancing,
With arms replaced by hook and plow,
 And peace-wrought banners glancing,

Again shall prune the immortal tree,
 And graft it for the bearing
Of life that fits the century,
 Its structural birth-mark wearing.

Again shall break the fettered soil,
 And till for the unfolding
Of cryptic germs that wait the toil
 Of kneeling workers' moulding.

Again proclaim the harvest home,
 As course the stars at gloaming
Toward an eternal sunlit zone
 Where dawns a better morning

When hosts bivouac in Virtue's camp,
 Where leap the fires reviving,
And allied forces sound the taps
 O'er nineteen centuries' striving.

Conscience

Team Work — Old and New

1620.

Blythe Conscience o'erworked, but forevermore game,
 Rounded up the full load of ship Mayflower fame.
 From topmast to keel she provisioned the same,
 Taking standing room only for her own modest claim.
 She steered that test craft through measureless brine
 With the still small pull of her wireless line.
 Her mother-wit-chart, aiding vision divine,
 Made the hit of all centuries — a Canaan on time!
 And though never coast-light cast a gleam on their way,
 Her pilgrim crew won beyond Cape Cod Bay:
 There, with Plymouth Rock sane, they decided to stay,
 And hold down those sand dunes in strict Mayflower way.

1920.

Now, strangely named craft patrol air, sea, and shore,
 With candle-power draft of a million or more,
 All trailing search-lights to the continents' core,
 Make a target of conscience (she's a terrible bore),
 But she's no easy mark. Later milestones to rate
 With the first on the spot in her Canaan estate,
 Her giant strides counter the humming world's gait
 To short-circuit those squadrons and war's din abate.
 In her bodiless way she's a world arbitrator,
 Of most fetching "notes" she's the champion dictator,
 And all the round earth from poles to equator
 May have quiet peace when its hosts federate her.
 Since she's all the world's collar, all the world's bits
 (Her best brands are marked, "Made in Massachusetts")
 We'd best sample them all, with true pilgrim wit,
 And sequester such heads as can't be made fit
 For fellowship true with her *newest world-deal*.
 While her old epic grand, unpliant as steel,

Has place on the scroll * of the old Bay state seal,
 'Twill turn pilgrim ghosts pink at thought of the zeal
 Their conscience code left to the ages as dower
 Co-heirs with the Bay state match the code of Mayflower!
 In that code of salt-marshes, clean for three hundred years
 Through deeds of plain people, their purpose, their tears,
 There's enough conscience team work and urge of ideas
 To girdle the planets a few more hundred years!

* Massachusetts motto: "With the sword she seeks quiet peace under liberty."

The Message of Those Lilies

"And upon the top of the pillars there was lily work: so were they finished."—
 1 KINGS vii. 22.

Turn your thoughts to the land,

Where the mire and the silt of ages long past
 To the depths of some still inland lake were once cast.
 Dank, slimy, unwholesome, there is born in its ooze
 A close folded bud; shall it haply refuse
 The darkly canopied way it must take
 Toward light? Wise, wise little bud in the depths of the lake!
 Straight upward it pushes, straight down it holds tight,
 Till color and fragrance and beauty unite

In the lily that dies in your hand.

Turn your hands to their task!

Handcraft is divine since Jesus the carpenter traced
 His pattern for everyday life. *No* time is for waste!
 Use your night of despair, with its long hours of gloom,
 As a way through the dark that shall lead to the bloom
 Of lilies high on the temple, God's and your own;
 Then take courage, heart, courage! you carve not alone!
 Till, in some dusky twilight, you shall raise tired eyes in
 joy and surprise,

Ere the tinge of eternity's morning shall rise,
 To the lilies that grew 'neath your hand.

Cripple's Consolation

Concord, 1904

(On seeing morning-glories growing on an old wheel.)

Old wheels, once parcel of a cart,
You've left the highway dusty,
Your fractured ribs are wide apart,
Your riven tires grow rusty.

Your hub's unbound with ancient rust,
Your tongue's a pastel story;
Ah! you no longer raise the dust,
You're plumed with morning glory!

Your quiet axle holds you true,
While strolling breezes tangle
Rich blooms of purple, white, and blue
With early dews a-spangle.

You heed not all the busy hum
Of rubber-tired sulky,
Of broomstick train or rattling drum,
Or lumber wagon bulky,

Stale traffic of the waking town
In which you once had part!
Your carting age has broken down,
You've lesion of the heart!

You doze beside the sleeping mill,
You start, perhaps, with nightmare!
You listen when the whippoorwill,
With sympathetic candor,

Recalls the blows of other days
That fell on ponies ready,
Who'd many a brush with spick-span bays
The while you held them steady

Till dusty foam flakes spattered far
Behid your rear companions;
You set the pace that won, aha!
You passed the foaming stallions!

I fear you kept the pace that kills,
In nascent days of varnish,
I wonder if your fibre thrills
Again to stretch the harness

And hear once more your metal grate
Along resistant gravel,
Endure once more the heavy weight,
Once more the highway travel.

Or doth contentment fill your days
Till vesper sparrow vary
The strophic song that overlays
Yon water-banded prairie;

And swift his aria quiet all
Your ghosts of past endeavor,
His shy, sweet note in benison fall
To lay them all forever?

Old wheels, you've chosen the better part
To *rest* here in the gloaming,
And picture forth with honest art
An age unfit for roaming.

And here, while summer dawnsings oft
Convoy the bee to rifle
The victor wreath you bear aloft
(Snatched from no vanquished rival),

Support, tho' youthful tendrils bind,
The hardy glory climbers,
And hear their handsome trumpets wind
Task limit for old timers.

And, resting thus, while Autumn lays
Brave tints up wood and marshland,
You'll see your dim perspective raise
A glow that baffles draughtsmen.

That even glow which maps the gauge
Of Indian summer's treasure,
Encompassing both youth and age
Like sharing in its measure.

No age but hath its epic new,
No age but hath its mission,
Time's level ground plane thru' and thru'
Is shot for inward vision.

And e'er shall wait on unvexed gaze
Of crippled age or station,
Renewal of that youth which sways
The fortunes of creation.

Who holds the morning-glory up,
Be it aging wheel or sinner,
Creates the glowing victor's cup,
And makes himself a winner.

Yellow Violets

Summer, 1920

ON EARTH.

Near a moss-crowned wall, where tardy springs wait,
In a shade only violets can brave
Will come hardy blooms, at summer's mandate
On wild field plants, a comrade once gave.
Thru' sharp years, the gift shall renew,
Impress and seal of boy comradeship rare
Will meet me above where no evil thing blew.

IN HEAVEN.

We bud, we sow, we scatter
We seed beside our mother
It would not seem to matter.
Love makes us what we seem,
We wish it were a dream.

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